



Digital:

Defined for defence –
core to mission



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He has over 18 years of experience in Accenture, with the last nine years leading work for the Australian Department of Defence and related clients. Prior to Accenture, Matt served for 14 years in the Australian Air Force as an engineering officer. He worked across a range of government clients to deliver large scale, IT-enabled transformation projects.

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Joining Accenture Federal Services in October 2016, Mary brings 34 years of experience leading intelligence, security and cyber organizations, including directing the Army's enterprise of 58,000 intelligence professionals, commanding the Army's 17,000-person global Intelligence Command, and serving as the Senior Military Intelligence Officer in Iraq and the Republic of Korea.

As the Army G2, she drove the development and execution of the U.S. Army's multi-billion-dollar Strategic Plan, expanded its Cyber forces, modernised the Army's Aerial and Ground ISR fleets, and drove the effort to modernise the Army's global intelligence information architecture, setting conditions for Army migration into the U.S. Intelligence Community Cloud and drive to digital.



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Joining Accenture in January 2016, General Stu brings 36 years of enterprise, institutional and operational leadership experience to bear. Highlights include 3 years leading the Canadian Armed Forces operational mission to anticipate, prepare for, and conduct multi-agency, multi-national and joint operations at home, in North America and globally, leading Canadian Armed Forces Joint Force Development, and Commanding the Canadian Army's doctrine and training command. His multiple international deployments include commanding a multi-national Brigade in Bosnia, and leading the 15 nation team delivering the NATO Training Mission for Police in Afghanistan.



Digital – core to defence. Now and next

Defence leaders, organisations and their supporting armed forces focus on the task of defending their nations, people and national interests.

They do this in perpetually contested and highly challenging operating contexts, domestically and internationally. Leaders in defence are charged to anticipate, plan, execute and successfully carry out operations in complex, multi-domain environments.

They must develop, deliver and generate mission-ready forces for these purposes. And they must envision, lead and manage defence programs with and for their governments. And now, more than ever in today's operational environment, they must also lead in the digital domain—as a core competence and strategic lever that is essential to securing their nation's operational, institutional and enterprise effectiveness and advantage.

Why?

Because now, more than ever, digital is central to enabling and empowering people and organisations to perform—from combat to defence program management and from shipbuilding to building force-readiness.

It is critical for gaining and maintaining situational awareness and understanding, foreseeing and mitigating risks, exploring opportunities, and forecasting and modelling to understand the potential consequences of failure. This applies to every functional and operational element across defence—from intelligence and targeting, recruiting and retention, supply chain and network resilience, and project management.

Digital is central to keeping pace and remaining interoperable with domestic and international partners and allies. It is vital to gain and maintain decision advantage over adversaries, and to remain resilient in the face of their escalating and increasingly sophisticated capabilities and attacks. Digital is not an option. It is core. Leaders must embrace it.



Digital in defence: leaders' business.

Defence leaders today recognise digital is core to their mission success—it pervades every aspect of their operational and strategic readiness.

In both the commercial and federal sectors, defence leaders are beginning to understand that in the drive to transform their organisations to digital, these efforts only succeed when leaders are at the centre.

Accenture's experience strongly indicates that organisations succeeding in these efforts are doing so only when they have leaders who know enough, understand enough, imagine enough, and desire enough, to command and demand that the best of digital is applied to their mission and organisational requirements.

To be successful, leaders must have a shared understanding of what digital is, what it enables, why it matters, what it includes and what it takes to get it done.

Digital in action: digital as core

The US Department of Defense has begun a journey toward a Combined Joint All-Domain Command and Control (CJADC2) concept where “each of the military's six branches connects sensors, shooters, and command nodes in a ‘mesh network’ that allows commanders the ability to act faster.” The concept brings together mission and intelligence data from across joint, national security, and open-source networks.¹

While in its beginning years, the CJADC2 concept is improving how the DoD acts digitally across data, cloud, C4ISR, platforms, DevSecOps and more – key strategic steps for digital readiness.



Digital defined for defence

So what does Accenture mean by digital?

To begin with, digital is about much more than technology and technology adoption. Digital is the integration of digital technology into all areas of an organisation,

fundamentally changing the way it operates and delivers. Digital for defence puts organisation, mission and people at the centre of everything it does. Digital capabilities enable people and teams to be informed, to remain connected and dynamic, and to be flexible enough to embrace continuous change. Digital enables them to see, understand and act in the face of emerging threats or mission requirements.

By evolving into a digital and data-centric organisation, with organisation-wide data, connected platforms, analytical insights, collaboration, and modular operating models, leaders in defence will be able to increase productivity, speed and responsiveness to mission and decision-making—while keeping users and decision makers at the centre of everything.

When do you know you have arrived?

The journey to digital is long, requiring strategy, vision and time over target. For leaders to know when they have arrived, they must be able to make the crucial distinction between ‘doing’ digital and ‘becoming’ digital. As we have seen in both the commercial and federal sectors, there may be parts of organisations that are successfully experimenting with transformational business models and technology. Elsewhere, there may be ‘pilots’ or ‘proofs of concept’ underway. But leaders must recognise that it is easy to confuse these pilots and one-offs with effective enterprise-wide efforts that will scale or sustain perpetual transformation and innovation. This insight requires the right culture and behaviour to amplify digital’s effects.

When done well, and at enterprise scale, digital can fundamentally change how people and organisations operate through the integration of digital technologies, digital behaviours and new ways of delivering on the defence mission in all areas.

So where is defence on this journey? What we see and hear from defence leaders and organisations

Most senior leaders acknowledge the importance of digital, but some are finding it hard to work out how to get started.



Challenges include how to organise their teams, how to characterise their current efforts, or where to find the external resources and drive the contemporary partnerships with industry and non-traditional providers that enable quality planning and effective delivery of digital in all their efforts.

Advancing senior leadership's digital literacy as a priority is a critical precursor for defence leaders to be effective in leading these efforts. Initiatives that raise leaders' digital literacy can help socialise and provide background and context for the components, risks, opportunities and benefits of the digital transformation journey. It will also prepare leaders to be the change agents to drive their organisations forward.

Once informed, leaders must then assess their organisation's level of digital maturity and readiness for change. Leaders will need to know how best to assess the effectiveness of current efforts, where they are along their path to digital, what are the next best steps and how receptive their people are to change.

In this context, industry, suppliers and providers can overwhelm defence and military leaders by bringing them discrete parts of digital solutions, rather than conveying how to effectively implement them.

While all defence ecosystem partners have something to offer and will seek to be part of the service and solution, those that provide niche elements to the larger effort without actual experience in implementation at scale may distract defence leaders from their larger goals. In these efforts, defence leaders in pursuit of becoming digital must engage with professional partners who can help them "cut to the chase", look beyond the shiny objects to see the whole picture, and understand all the elements that come together in terms of technology, services and governance to deliver new ways of working.

Digital in action: digital twins and digital threads

The US Naval Sea Systems Command is developing next-generation logistics that increase weapon system uptime at lower costs.

The Model Based Product Support (MBPS) program delivers product data and readiness analytics, as well as weapon systems digital twins that enable predictive analysis and modelling to "execute maintenance and supply actions at the organizational, intermediate, and depot levels."²



With that in mind,

progressive defence leaders are increasingly willing to share their vision and engage with partners to expand it and make it real. They are honest about their individual digital literacy and seek to measure and understand their true organisational readiness.

They want to invest in the fundamentals while also setting and achieving their 'North Star' for digital. They prefer to understand the place and relevance of industry offerings in this light rather than as standalone solutions. And, crucially, defence and industry ecosystem leaders both benefit when they are open and transparent. How? Because such collaboration

means defence acquires greater literacy and readiness, and the industry ecosystem becomes better educated about the defence vision and how to help bring it about.

Finally, many leaders who are on board to drive digital are also anxious to find the right opportunities to achieve early mission impact, build confidence, inspire collective action and drive digital

transformation across the enterprise and the force. Identifying the best opportunities to demonstrate value, build support, and accelerate progress toward a mature, digitally transformed enterprise is important. Its success can inspire and empower others to move in a similar fashion.

Assessing defence digital readiness— digital DOTLMS

Defence leaders have developed ways to describe and characterise the elements and attributes that deliver operational capability.

These typically include doctrine, organisational design, people, training, education, equipment and material, information technology, leadership and infrastructure. Critically, it's when these are combined and orchestrated that they best serve to create enduring capabilities that support the force and its mission.

Digital has its own version of this construct, which includes a range of elements and activities that on their own have little or no lasting effect. But when brought together, they create and contribute huge capabilities and effects, empowering people—at every level and in every function—to better achieve their assigned tasks. This is what we mean by digital readiness. Its key components are:



Human-centred design

the democratised, engaging and creative processes that secure real user inputs, engage people in the entirety of the process, and produce solutions and outcomes that are focused on the leaders and people at the centre of the mission and function

Development

the continuous creation, development, prototyping, implementation and feedback of latest ideas and capabilities

Ways of working

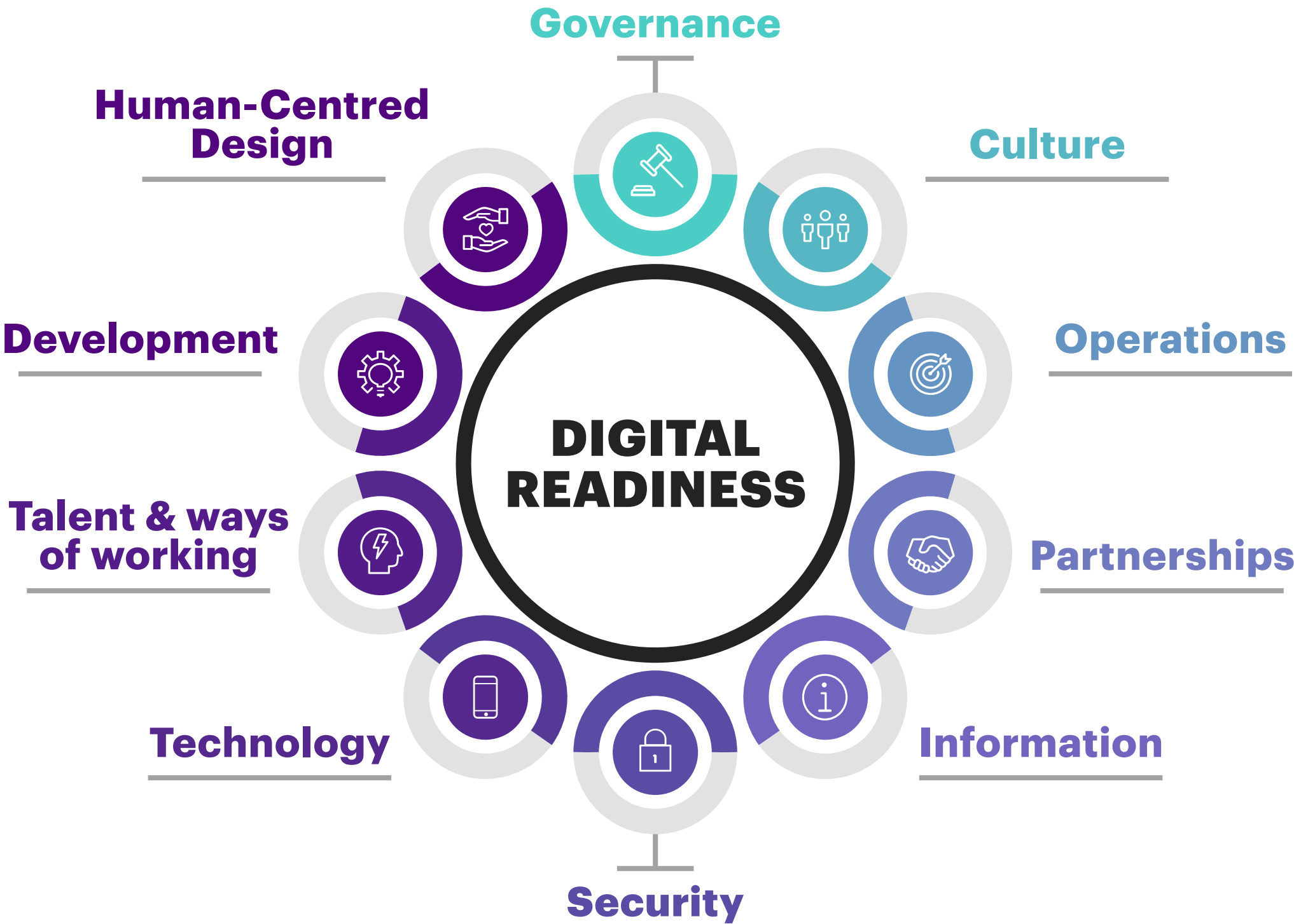
that engage, equip and empower people with tools and methodologies that foster innovation mindsets and deliver outcomes

Technology

the flexible, agile, and resilient technology landscape that supports the delivery of new capabilities and methods of working at speed and at scale

Security

the critical importance of cybersecurity in all facets of the digital dimensions to assure the mission and its resiliency in all parts of the enterprise and in all phases of combat.



Leadership and governance

a comprehensive and strategic digital agenda led and championed by the agency and its leadership, and enabled by leaders in all readiness functions

Culture

shared knowledge, understanding, desire and pursuit of digital that incentivises, invites collaboration, tolerates uncertainty and embraces change

Operations

effectively driving collaboration and digital agenda process management

Partnerships

identifying, prioritising, engaging and sustaining strategic ecosystem partnerships

Information

the security of networks and data, and the means to convert data into effective visualisation, insight and understanding



Defence's mission partners on the journey to digital

The elements of digital readiness apply equally to every type of organisation. While defence and armed forces are unique in their mission, vocation and authority to support the defence of the nation, their journeys to digital modernisation are not.



Leaders in the digital age understand the advantage and necessity of leveraging commercial digital skills, technologies and behaviours to optimise data for decision-making and mission advantage.

Increasingly, these leaders understand that bringing the best of digital to bear does not have to rely on products and approaches unique to defence or produced by defence. Proven commercial projects, products, processes and practices, once adapted and adopted, accelerate their efforts for mission impact—removing the need to ‘build their own’ and perfect or customise the last five per cent.

As to what to do when, leaders need to remain focused on realising their desired outcomes—while promoting and accepting agility and flexibility in how to make that happen.

Defence organisations able to achieve this pursue a “continuous digital agenda” that:



Ensures the digital foundations are in-place to enable enduring and robust operational, institutional and enterprise results



Continuously seeks to uncover and address current and emerging pain points and challenges, seeing new opportunities for change—and leading to a continuously evolving set of aspirations for the organisation



Remains mindful of growing digital readiness as a strategic asset with decisive organisational potential



Focuses on realising value—be it trapped in the organisation today, realised through new tech and ways of working tomorrow, or a combination of both



Works and serves the present and future concurrently—in a bold agenda of digital initiatives and an agile plan that establishes the right foundations to sustain and scale digital.

Acting now! Mobilising for action—how to create a digital movement within defence

Knowing what digital is, why it matters, and what it includes are the most important first steps for any leader preparing to embrace the drive to digital.



Yet leaders who understand the criticality of digital often face the challenge of moving forward within the specific context of their own organisation.

To protect against the risk of inertia halting their digital journey before it starts, leaders must recognise the important (but often subtle) distinction between legitimate and presumed constraints.

With legitimate constraints, such as a mandate to abide by specific restrictions set out in law, the objective is to find innovative solutions that approach problems from new angles, uncovering novel ways to work within these limits or circumvent them entirely.

For presumed constraints, such as historical precedents and norms

governing common processes and procedures, the best solution is rapid escalation. This approach is core to how digital native companies operate, and with good reason. It recognises that the struggle of trying to navigate complex and counterintuitive systems is often enough on its own to deter visionaries and change agents. Instead, rapid escalation encourages leaders and their teams to move quickly, taking conversations to the people whose motivations align with the organisation's strategic objectives. Incidentally, these individuals also tend to have the authority to demand immediate action.

Digital in action: human experience-led design

In Australia, the project PostingConnect has illustrated a new demand for human experience-led projects. This reimagines what a successful posting would look like, not just for the service member, but also for their family. "Back to basics" research and genuine enquiry about what would make a difference is the key, not just gathering "user requirements" in an outdated paradigm.³



But generating enough momentum to make such escalations successful and enabling the enterprise to break through the wall of inertia it faces, can still be a challenge. To address it, we recommend three quick steps to develop a grass-roots movement that captures attention:

Step 1

01

Start and develop a conversation:

Getting the entire organisation moving is hard, but getting people talking is much easier. Initiate change by asking leaders questions about where the organisation is going, and how it will take advantage of digital to equip itself for the uncertain future ahead. Conversational momentum can be established, capturing and sharing powerful insights about early explorations on the digital topic, helping to spread the message and energise a larger group of like-minded change agents.

When starting this conversation, it's vital to focus in on the early assessment of digital literacy and readiness. Capturing the critical digital needs and gaps of the organisation to generate buy-in and support for action in and via digital is essential. Success in creating conversational momentum can be harnessed to seek early-stage sponsorship from more visionary leaders who see the promise in digital, regardless of the existing depth of their knowledge.

02

Educate leaders

A strategy for digital education at all levels of the organisation is essential. To start this, an initial framework with supporting mental models gleaned from the conversations already in train can act as the centrepiece. To expand awareness of and familiarity with the digital agenda, it's important to use structured professional military and public sector education activities across all development / education periods.

The focus of those educational interactions should be to reframe the topic of digital change, and help leaders understand both the urgency and potential for value associated with it. Engaging with sceptics can be essential to understanding common objections and use these insights to craft future messages as well as developing the digital agenda itself. And educational activities can help assess the extent of an organisation's true digital readiness and inform actions to accelerate.



Create, sustain and evolve a coalition:

Establishing a broader group of educated and motivated leaders and organisational partners will drive advocacy for digital change. What's more, tapping into their organisational clout can broaden the coalition with representation from across critical stakeholder groups.

Complementary leadership pairings can help drive the agenda across all elements of digital readiness. That might mean pairing one visionary leader to reimagine the organisation and one with the operator's mindset necessary to bring it to life. These leaders, and the coalition supporting them, should be encouraged to escalate the urgency of digital transformation, shifting senior leaders' conversation from "why" to "when", "how" and "with whom."

It's also critical to help the "central agencies" who approve funding and procurement understand and buy-in to digital defence transformation. Modern defence digital leaders need to be enabled to better describe the benefits of some of the large programs that are seeking government investment, as well as risks and consequences of failing to invest and act.

Operational effectiveness comes from combined and joint forces. So does effectiveness in realising digital empowerment. Ecosystem partnerships are essential in digital delivery. No integrator or vendor delivers alone. They must all work together—in partnership with defence and armed forces—bringing their individual and collective best capabilities to the defence team and mission. They bring capabilities that defence on its own cannot and should not seek to create independently.

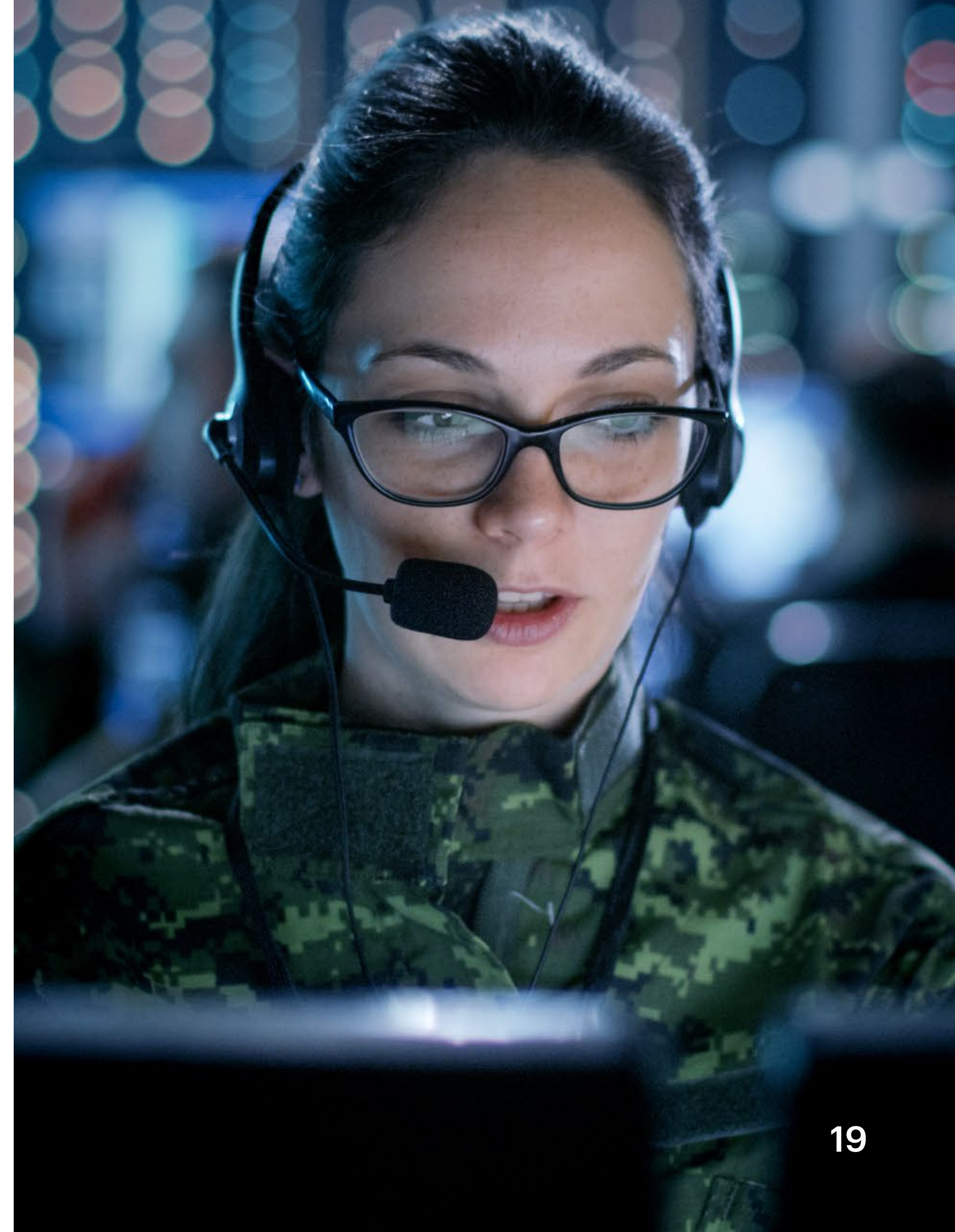
The final goal is maintaining momentum. Many digital journeys end prematurely by not delivering tangible results quickly, or failing to scale their value beyond proofs-of-concept and pilots. In both cases, the transformations stall once those who advocate for change are disappointed at the absence of visible progress in their day-to-day lives. Therefore, it is critical that well-structured digital agendas strike the right balance. They need to blend focused initiatives that create easily celebrated results with more complex undertakings that aim to tackle deeper issues.

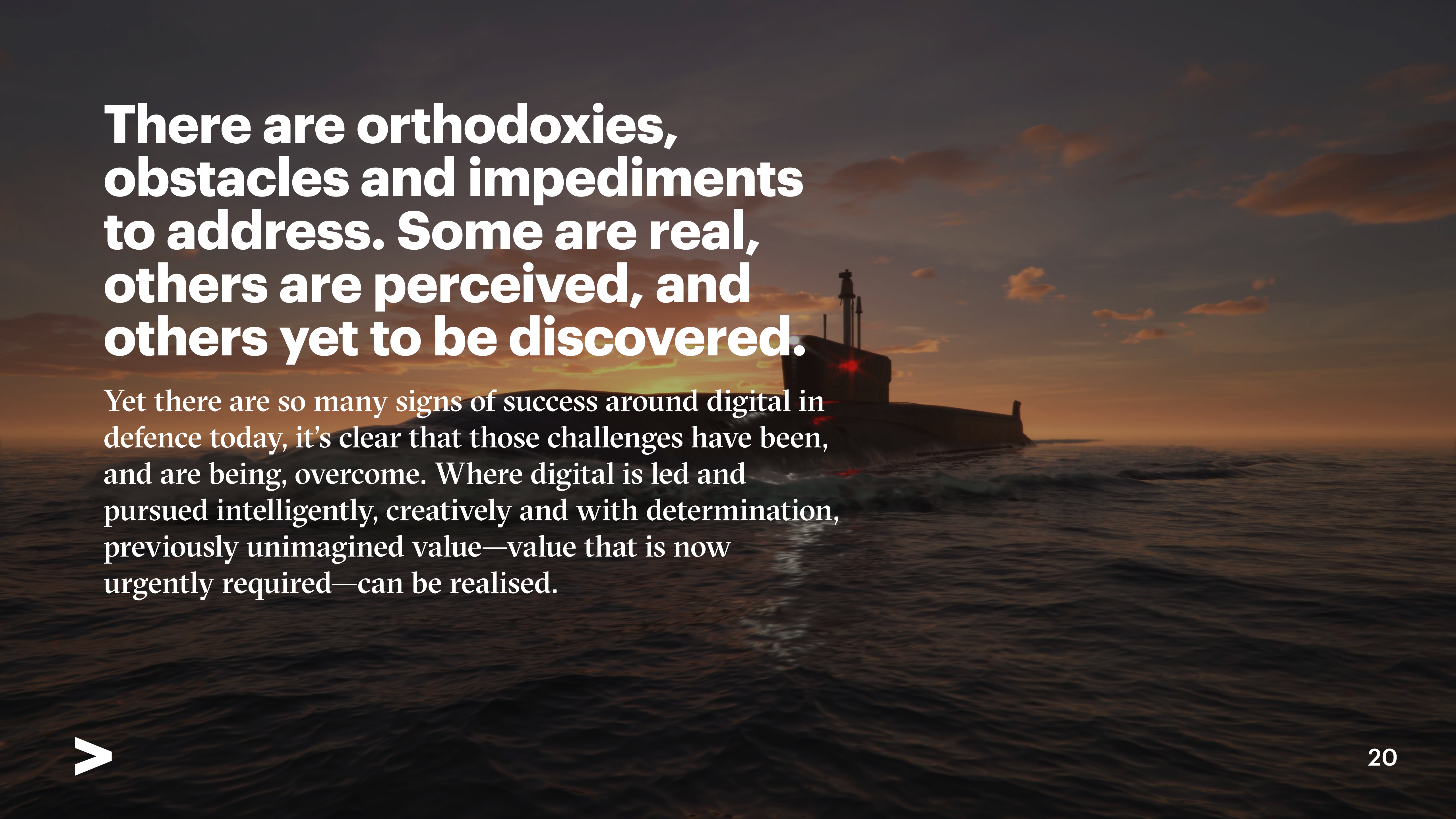
Digital: core to defence, and leaders' business

Neither the core functions essential to defence organisations nor the unique nature of military operations and the profession of arms are called into question by acknowledging, embracing and acting on digital as core—and digital as leaders' business.

Instead, the powering of operations, the institution and the enterprise, and the empowerment of people in their individual and collective performance to focus on outcomes via digital is the point.

The importance and urgency to move out—and the risks and consequences of not doing so—are real, present, and potentially existential. In a hostile world and competitive environment, all defence's responsibilities and duties will be enabled or frustrated by the degree to which digital becomes and evolves as core and, crucially, the degree to which it is championed by leaders.



A submarine is visible on the surface of the ocean, moving from left to right. The scene is set during sunset or sunrise, with a warm orange and yellow glow on the horizon and scattered clouds in the sky. The water is dark with visible ripples. A large, bold, white text overlay is positioned on the left side of the image.

There are orthodoxies, obstacles and impediments to address. Some are real, others are perceived, and others yet to be discovered.

Yet there are so many signs of success around digital in defence today, it's clear that those challenges have been, and are being, overcome. Where digital is led and pursued intelligently, creatively and with determination, previously unimagined value—value that is now urgently required—can be realised.

References

1. [Army, Air Force Form Partnership, Lay Foundation for Interoperability](#)
2. [Accenture Federal Services Named Prime Systems Integrator for U.S. Navy's Logistics and IT Transformation Model Based Product Support Program](#)
3. [Accenture scores Defence's PostingConnect](#)

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